

Member in attendance: Cynthia Bannon, Garrett Barry, Cheryl Morrissey, Doug

Reynolds, Steve Shestakofsky, Bev Witten, Fran Yuan

Absent: Judie Feins, Art Heron, Bill Rudman, Maria Turreilles

Liaisons: Lt. Peter Hoerr, Police Department

1. 3-14-05 meeting minutes

Members voted to accept the minutes of the 3-14-05 meeting. There was no quorum at the 3/19/05 meeting so no minutes were approved for that meeting.

2. HRC surveys

Fran distributed a portion of the newly-received surveys to committee members. Doug agreed to check into the high school on-line survey responses to see what's been sent in. Fran will check into surveys in the Selectmen's office, which may just be extra copies of the survey. She suggested that student survey responses (green ones) be recorded on separate sheets. It was agreed that at the next meeting we will finalize a date by which we can more or less stop taking in surveys. Members should try to record the surveys they've been given so far. We should establish a time frame for completing this entire project.

3. Introduction to Belmont against Racism representatives

Kathryn Bonfiglio, Mike Collins, and Jonathan Jacoby from Belmont against Racism attended the meeting. Kathryn reviewed BAR's history, including its educational and advocacy role in the community since 1992. She mentioned current attendance of 400 people at the annual MLK breakfast and fundraising at MLK for the After-school METCO Transportation Fund, which enables late buses for Boston students to participate in sports and the arts. They have also been involved in programs, forums, books for the library, diversity training, annual meeting, and the Vision Committee, among other things. Programs such as the one on Hate Crimes with Bill Johnson were mentioned. They will have Rep. Shirley Owens Hicks speaking at their annual meeting on the role of African-Americans in the state legislature.

BAR has financial resources, and collaboration on programs of mutual interest was discussed. BAR has initiated dialogue with the Belmont Police, meeting with Richard Lane and James McIssac. Ideas about collaborative programs were discussed, including a community dialogue with a facilitator, possibly sponsored by the Vision Committee, BAR, HRC, and the police, among others.

It was suggested by Doug that the HRC invite a BAR representative to be a liaison to the HRC, something Paul Solomon also recommended at one time. Steve felt we should encourage liaisons from as many groups as possible.

Mike suggested that more focus might be put on the police, who are the "face of the town". Agreement and disagreement regarding this was voiced.

Fran said that we should consider having definite goals, form subcommittees and be more visible. Bev suggested we start work on educational programs concurrently with our finishing our work on the survey results.

Lt. Hoerr thought it would be easier to coordinate work if the HRC and BAR were brought together more, since there is so much overlap.

It was agreed that we wanted BAR to have a liaison to the HRC. Kathryn Bonfiglio agreed to serve as the liaison with Mike Collins as the alternate.

Bev will serve on a subcommittee with two other HRC volunteers to begin to discuss and work with BAR on educational programs. Two other HRC members are asked to step forward, and it was emphasized that this should be a diverse group, if possible.

4. HRC at Belmont Town Day

Fran volunteered to look into getting a table at Town Day on Sat., May 21st. She will see if the Vision Committee plans to have a table and if so, whether the HRC can share their table.

Otherwise, she will look into getting an individual table. We would have someone at a table at least between 10 am -3 pm. It was suggested that two people sit at the table at a time. Cheryl, Doug, Bev, Bill, and Cynthia agreed they could be at the table from 1-2 hours.

5. Graffiti in Belmont Center tunnel under railroad tracks

Maria Toureilles phoned Fran last weekend to let her know that there was a racial slur written in the Belmont Center tunnel over one portion of a mural depicting people of African descent. She was very upset about this and called the police to have it removed. While it wasn't removed immediately, Lt. Hoerr reported going over mid-week to remove it. He took pictures of it and circulated these at the meeting. He will file a report on it, but in such cases, the perpetrators are usually never identified. Doug mentioned that Bill Johnson would advise not to erase it and to put yellow "crime scene" tape around it to make a point of how seriously it is taken. The pros and cons of this approach were discussed.

Discussion ensued regarding how the mural in the tunnel might be repainted, possibly as a project with a diversity-related theme. The tunnel is managed by the T. Lt. Hoerr agreed to find out about what is involved in our possibly sponsoring an art project/event to repaint it. It was suggested that elementary or middle school children perhaps could do it with supervision. Doug mentioned we need a school liaison. Mike pointed out that United Nations Day is in October and thought maybe a project could happen then. Fran mentioned that the Youth Commission might want a project for kids this summer.

6. Incidence Process / Charge/ MCAD

Steve brought up a number of other issues:

- The complaint process is now renamed the incidence process. Often it will be preferable to resolve complaints informally. Two tracks: formal and informal. Bring this up again on May 2nd.
- He went back to the Selectmen re: charge. Paul Solomon says he doesn't plan to bring this up in the near future so that the charge to investigate remains part of our charge.
- Mass. Commission Against Discrimination used to have an operating agreement with HRCs to deputize HRCs to do their work on a local level. This may no longer be true, but Steve will look into it.

7. Report to Selectmen

Garrett and Steve will put together a draft of a report to the Selectmen about our work thus far for the May 2nd meeting. Anyone who will not be in attendance at the next meeting is asked to send their input to Garrett and Steve.

8. Next meetings:

Monday, May 2 and Thursday, May 19. Cynthia will secure the rooms for these meetings and reserve the projector/screen for Doug's PowerPoint presentation on May 19th. Members are asked to let Garrett know if you will be in attendance at these meetings.

9. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Yuan